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GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVELS.

Zoological Explorations in the Far North.—There is rejoicing at the State University of Iowa over the safe return of Mr. Frank Russell, after two and a half years' absence in the far north, where he has been engaged in zoological explorations.

Mr. Russell undertook to secure series of specimens of the larger mammals, besides birds, ethnological material, etc., from the less accessible parts of North America embraced in the region between Lake Winnipeg and the Arctic Coast. His explorations were made under the auspices of the State University of Iowa, from which institution he graduated in 1892.

Arriving in August, of 1892, at the mouth of the Saskatchewan River, on the northwest shore of Lake Winnipeg, he spent the first winter in securing series of moose, northern hare, ptarmigan, etc., and also became accustomed to the management of dog-sleds and snow-shoes, thus securing the necessary training and experience for the more serious work of the succeeding year. Voluminous notes were taken of the fauna of the region, and much information secured concerning the folk-lore and religious customs of the Swampy Cree Indians.

In February, of that year, Mr. Russell traversed the length of Lake Winnipeg, some three hundred miles, on snow-shoes, experiencing some of the coldest weather met with during his entire trip. From Winnipeg he went to Fort McLeod, near the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains, just north of the boundary line, where six weeks were spent in collecting mammals and birds. Returning by rail to Edmonton, he traveled overland to Athabasca Landing and then descended the Athabasca River in a York-boat, with some officers of the Hudson Bay Company, reaching Fort Chippewyan, on Lake Athabasca, May 15th. A month was spent on the shores of the lake in securing a series of the birds of that region, the collector camping out alone during the entire time, living in a little "A" tent, and seeing but one man—a Cree Indian.

Early in July, our explorer proceeded down the Slave River to Great Slave Lake, reaching Fort Rae, on the northwest extension of the lake, early in August. This point was his base of operations until May of the succeeding year. During his various hunting trips from this center, he explored the vast and little-known territory around the Great Slave Lake, in some cases reaching points at least four hundred

miles from the Fort. During the winter, he traveled between twenty-one and twenty-two hundred miles on snow-shoes, driving his own dog-team and living, in almost all respects, the life of an Indian. He found it necessary to depend on himself alone, the natives being entirely unreliable. His more important excursions from Fort Rae were as follows:

A trip up the Yellow-Knife River to learn, if possible, something of the summer fauna of Barren Ground, and to secure the services of an Indian who had been recommended as trustworthy, but proved more of a hindrance than an aid.

Next, about five hundred miles were traveled in hunting for the Barren Ground caribou. A sufficient number were killed to secure a large supply of meat, and eleven skins and skulls of selected specimens were added to the collection, which has since arrived safely at Iowa City.

In midwinter, December and January, a long and arduous trip was taken in the hope of securing specimens of the wood buffalo, a variety of the American buffalo which still inhabits the region lying to the south and southwest of the Great Slave Lake. During this trip, Mr. Russell swung around a circle in which the whole of the Great Slave Lake was included, and also the territory for one hundred miles or more to the southwest. No wood buffalo were seen, nor even traces of them, although the very heart of their supposed range was traversed. Mr. Russell heard that two specimens had been killed that winter by the Indians, but they were apparently all that had been seen. He considers the race as almost exterminated, as their range is reported, by the Indian hunters, as very limited.

During March and April our explorer accomplished the main purpose for which he went north, *i. e.*, the capture of a series of musk-ox. The difficulties overcome at this time were such as to demonstrate the fact that Mr. Russell must take rank among the very foremost of plucky and persevering explorers in the far north. The musk-ox were four hundred miles from Fort Rae and two hundred miles from the edge of the woods. The Indians were unwilling to aid the explorer, having a firm belief that if a musk-ox were taken from the Barren Ground, and mounted in some distant country, all the others would go to join it. Those who have had to do with Indian superstition know the hopelessness of arguments, bribes or threats in such cases. Undismayed by this unforeseen and seemingly fatal obstacle, Mr. Russell allowed the Indians to depart without him, well knowing that it is their custom to camp on the edge of the Barren Ground for some time for the purpose of killing caribou before going on the long musk-ox hunt, and know-

ing also that they would get out of ammunition and send a man two hundred miles back to the Fort for a new supply. When this messenger made his appearance as expected, Mr. Russell announced his determination to accompany him back to the Barren Ground, *volens volens*. He persuaded him to make the best of the inevitable and accept pay for the enforced service. This was finally agreed to. Mr. Russell joined a band of the Indians at the edge of the Barren Ground, and accompanied them, driving his own dog-team and running behind the loaded sled until the "Musk-Ox Hills," two hundred miles distant on the treeless Barren Ground, were reached. These "Hills," by the way, he found to be mountains, several thousand feet high, and not far from Bathurst Inlet. The band of Indians separated into two squads, and succeeded in killing about one hundred of the musk-ox, including every one that was seen. The animals were found in comparatively small herds, rounded up by the dogs and mercilessly slaughtered. Mr. Russell killed four that had escaped from the main group as they were running off, and several others at another time. He was allowed five skins by the Indians, although he had killed a much larger number with his Winchester. These were all superb specimens—four males and a female, and, with the heavy horns and massive skulls, they made a sled load of such dimensions that the dog-team, although the strongest of the lot, became so weak before the woods were reached that Mr. Russell had to aid them almost constantly by pushing the sled from behind. Twenty-two days, in all, were passed on the Barren Ground. The explorer thought that about one thousand musk-ox were killed that season by the various bands of Indians who enter the Barren Ground from the south. The Esquimaux also penetrate the same region from the Arctic Coast, and, on one occasion, the Indians and Esquimaux have met. It is therefore evident that the musk-ox of the Barren Ground is doomed to follow the bison of the Plains, and join the rapidly growing list of "mammals recently exterminated."

On May 10th, Mr. Russell left Fort Rae, where he had received the kindest treatment and invaluable aid from the Hudson Bay officer in charge, Mr. Hodgson, and proceeded around the north shore of Great Slave Lake to Fort Providence, which he reached after unusual suffering from hunger and exposure. He found that the north shore of the lake was very inaccurately represented on the maps. At this time he was compelled to leave his faithful dogs with the Indians, although he exceedingly regretted the necessity. On May 25th, he succeeded in reaching a steamer, which had wintered about twenty miles below Fort Providence on the Mackenzie River, and proceeded down as far as

Fort Good Hope, which is almost exactly under the Arctic Circle. From here he paddled alone in a small canoe to Fort McPherson, two hundred and eighty miles farther north. Here he was joined by the celebrated French explorer, Count de Sainville, with whom he kept company for the remainder of his trip. While going to the mouth of the Mackenzie, some hundred and sixty miles below, he killed a grizzly bear as it was swimming the river. From the mouth of the Mackenzie he paddled his canoe through the ice-floes in the Arctic Sea to Herschel Island, a distance of one hundred miles, this being, in all probability, the first time a one-man canoe has ever gone over these waters. Several American whaling vessels had passed the previous winter at Herschel Island, and left two days after Mr. Russel reached that point. He made arrangements with Captain Newth, of the steam-whaler "*Jeanette*," for transportation to San Francisco, at the end of the whaling season. Two months were spent in making ornithological and ethnological collections on this island and the adjacent mainland, a remarkably fine series being secured.

August 30th, the "*Jeanette*" returned to Herschel Island and took on board Mr. Russell and his collections. The vessel then sailed to the region north of Wrangel Land, and here the passenger had the pleasure of seeing the process of killing and cutting up a large whale. Turning southward, the "*Jeanette*" touched at two points on the Siberian Coast, where Mr. Russell secured a monster Polar bear skin and skull, numerous ethnological specimens, and a unique collection of Esquimaux ivory work, graved, etched and colored, besides a pair of enormous walrus tusks. After a very rough voyage, the vessel entered the Golden Gate on October 27th, bearing the two passengers who had been the first men to traverse the vast length of the Athabasca, Slave and Mackenzie basins to the coast, returning to civilization by way of the Arctic Sea, Behring Straits and California.

Mr. Russell's collections have all been received in excellent condition, and constitute probably the finest series of zoological and ethnological specimens which have thus far been brought from the far north by any one explorer.

C. C. NUTTING.